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SUPPLIES OF MISCELLANEOUS CIVILIAN GOODS AND SERVICES IN GERMANY

I. SUMMARY

The shortage of consumer goods, including essential personal and household goods, constitutes one of the conspicuous weaknesses in the German economy today. The production of many types of goods has been prohibited by official decree while other goods have been standardized and are now manufactured only on a greatly reduced scale. With the exception of certain luxury or semi-luxury goods which are no longer obtainable, the purchase of all consumer goods is either rationed or subject to the purchasing-warrant system or a combination of the two. Purchase also frequently requires the surrender of a used article. The shortage is basically due to the closing of factories owing to the lack of labor and raw materials, and to the conversion of the consumer goods industry to war production. The demands of the military have also contributed to the scarcity. From a more short-range point of view, however, and from the point of view of future developments, Allied bombing with the increasing needs of the bombed-out constitutes the decisive factor.

The most significant factor in the German consumer goods situation at the present time is the extent to which new and severe restrictions have been placed upon production

and consumption, amounting frequently to outright prohibition, within the last seven months under the total mobilization plan. It is apparent that the beginning of 1943 constituted a definite turning point in this aspect of German economy, with the shift from a long period of merely standardized and restricted production to one of outright prohibition of the production of all but the most essential goods, and with consumption limited almost exclusively to air raid victims. This may indicate either an increasing scarcity of labor and basic raw materials or merely a determination on the part of the Germans to maximize war production.

While the extent to which the population can continue to rely for some time upon reserves accumulated in the past should not be underestimated, many signs point to the conclusion that even such stocks have become notably tighter within the last few months. Most stocks in stores are exhausted, and an estimated 80,000 out of 600,000 stores were closed entirely for lack of goods[1] as of February 1, 1943, while large numbers have been closed since that time. Under the total mobilization plan of February 1943 restrictions have been placed on all retail establishments with the exception of those selling food (except sweets), coal, fertilizers, seed, feed, and agricultural equipment. However, the plan has progressed slowly, principally because of acute civilian discontent and the objections of those whose businesses are affected by the

1. Frankfurter Zeitung, 6 February 1943, p. 1.

orders.[1] In addition, such small stocks as remained in the hands of dealers have been frozen under the total mobilization plan and requisitioned for the aid of the bombed out. Evidence also exists of the requisitioning of goods from household stocks and the limiting of the number of various household goods that each family may retain. A further indication of the tightening in supplies is the greatly increased resort to barter. While the price of finished consumer goods as a whole has risen by about 15 percent since June 1939, and to a much greater extent in the case of certain commodities, this is of little significance since the supply of money is more than ample to purchase whatever goods may be available. The great increase in the number of barter advertisements in

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1. The Government has divided retail businesses into four categories: (1) establishments selling food (except sweets), coal, fertilizers, seed, feed, and agricultural equipment; (2) houses dealing with surgical instruments, chemicals, drugs, hardware, household goods, textiles, and stationery; (3) dealers in furniture, tapestry, linoleum, books, music, leather goods, toys, flowers, haberdashery, umbrellas and canes, second-hand goods, and cleaning and dyeing establishments; (4) shops selling radios, pianos, luxury china, rugs, furs, perfumes, jewelery, stamps, sporting goods and confectionery. Those enterprises which fall into the first category will be virtually exempt from the closing decree, while the other three groups will be subject to increasing restrictions with the fourth group closed entirely. Special consideration will be given to stores which repair as well as sell if the repair work is of essential nature. Non-essential departments of department stores will be closed, and the closing order will also apply to de luxe hotels and some luxury restaurants and bars. It is believed that these decrees will effect economies in housing and utilities, limit excess purchasing power, and result in some increase in the number of armament workers and the strength of the armed forces. Board of Economic Warfare, P-116, No. 14, 10 March 1943.

German newspapers relative to the number of ads for sale or purchase indicates the desire of both parties to get something concrete in return which mere cash no longer assures. The Government has facilitated this development by setting up official barter exchanges.

One of the first indications of the increasing seriousness of the situation came with the Kriegsauflage-programm of November 1942, restricting production to two hundred types of essential goods -- such as baskets, pots and pans, furniture, and toothbrushes -- of a simplified and standardized type, the manufacture of which was to receive the same protection in the allocation of labor and raw materials as the armaments industry. Production of all other goods was to be suppressed. Since then a large number of specific orders have been issued from time to time forbidding the manufacture of particular goods. The primary purpose of this emergency program was to supply the needs of the bombed-out population, and secondly to satisfy the urgent demand for household replacements. It is worth emphasizing that this was prior to the beginning of heavy and continued air attack on a large scale. However, it proved to be impossible to carry out even this limited program. One-quarter of the program has since been canceled and the scheduled production of the remainder in many cases further reduced.[1] The effect, in conjunction with the increased needs of air raid victims,

1. Bern (P) cable No. 2426, 17 April 1943; Bern (S) cable, CID 19754, 6 July 1943.

has been to restrict the purchase of new goods solely to the latter group,[1] the general population being left entirely dependent on reserves and whatever second hand goods may be obtainable. In many cases it has even proved necessary to superimpose a system of rationing among eligible purchasers.[2]

It should be noted that Germany apparently hopes to obtain some relief in the near future from an increased production of consumer goods in the occupied countries aided by German tools and raw materials. In this connection, duties and other restrictions on the import of goods, particularly from western Europe, have been greatly reduced or removed altogether as of December 1, 1942. The possibilities of this program are increased by the fact that the lack of labor rather than the lack of materials, is apparently the crucial factor in the reduction of German production. However, with the exception of this factor (which is still in the first stages) the German consumer goods position has taken a definite turn for the worse within recent months. At best the ordinary householder can expect no new replacements of his existing stock, while even the essential needs of air-raid victims and newly married couples can be met only with great difficulty.

II. ESSENTIAL HOUSEHOLD GOODS

The recent restrictions on production and consumption are most severely felt in the field of essential household goods.

1. Ministry of Economic Warfare, 12 April 1943.
2. Bern (P) cable No. 2426, 17 April 1943.

This is particularly true since production has already been severely limited, and stocks in the hands of dealers had been very low for some time prior to the latest restrictions. In Westmark, household goods were sold only to the bombed out as early as June 1942.[1] With few exceptions, purchases are limited to air-raid victims, and in many cases even such purchases are rationed. In particular, a decree of May 1943 specifically limited the sale of iron household goods to persons with purchasing certificates, in the issuance of which bomb damage is given primary consideration.[2] As of March 1943, newly married couples were given no assurance that they would be given purchasing warrants for household goods and furniture.[3] All purchases must be registered. Second-hand goods are still available to some extent, and some supplies have recently been received from France, including 500 tons of enamelled household goods.

A. Kitchenware, Cleaning Utensils, Dishes and Cutlery

The shortage of cooking utensils is acute. An order of March 1943 definitely prohibited the manufacture of tableware and kitchen utensils for ordinary civilian use.[4] The number of types of kitchen utensils was also further reduced.[5]

1. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 30 July 1942.
2. Die Zeitung, 21 May 1943, p. 1.
3. Voelkischer Beobachter, B.A., 5 March 1943.
4. Deutsche Bergwerke-Zeitung, 18 March 1943, p. 2.
5. Deutsche Bergwerke-Zeitung, 12 March 1943, p. 1.

According to a recent official census of 660 farm households, the supply of pans and of iron, metal, and enamelled goods in the average household had declined by 25 and 23 percent respectively since 1939.[1] If the estimate of a German domestic economist of fifteen pans as the minimum standard under normal conditions[2] may be taken and if it may therefore be assumed that the average German family still possesses ten or eleven pots and pans, it would seem that the stocks of established households are still sufficient to care for essential needs for some time. Since January 1943 the production of aluminum knives, forks, and spoons has been limited to one model, and the number of manufacturers reduced from forty to fourteen.[3] It has recently been reported that owners of copper utensils had to register their articles before the end of July. However, the articles did not need to be given up immediately and housewives were to be given replacements made of other metals.[4]

Because of the scarcity of natural bristles, a large proportion of the brushes manufactured in Germany have bristles of Perlon or PC-U fiber, and such brushes can be used for virtually all purposes.[5] The supply is limited although they are apparently still being produced. According to the census of

1. Bern (P) cable No. 2426, 17 April 1943.
2. Lotz, Wilhelm. Wie Richte Ich meine Wohnung Ein?, Berlin, 1930.
3. Frankfurter Zeitung, 26 January 1943.
4. Dagens, 20 July 1943.
5. OSS 27534.

farm households,[1] the average number of ordinary brushes for household use has declined by 41 percent since 1939, of scrubbing brushes by 59 percent, scouring brushes by 54 percent, and brooms by 47 percent.

The farm census further indicates that since 1939 the supply of various types of dishes in farm households has declined as follows: cups 46 percent, plates 37 percent, bowls 35 percent, porcelain and crockery 31 percent, glassware 28 percent, and wooden goods 21 percent. Plans are under consideration, if not already in effect, for the rationing of earthenware and porcelain articles. In Stettin and other cities glassware and porcelain supplies are set aside solely for the needs of air-raid victims. Pottery, porcelain and chinaware have been standardized for some time and are now virtually unobtainable, and any available stocks are, for the most part, reserved for victims of bombings.[2] The glass shortage is especially serious because of the problem of replacing windows broken in air raids. According to a decree of February 1943, the production of many articles of tubular and flat glass, including small glassware, is prohibited.[3] Some glass is being imported from Yugoslavia, and the Trade Group of the German glass, earthenware and ceramics industries has made arrangements for the production of these goods in the occupied eastern

1. Bern (P) cable No. 2426, 17 April 1943.

2. Deutsche Allegemein Zeitung, 24 July 1942; L2370 (S), 2 February 1943.

3. Bern (P) telegram No. 1354, 27 February 1943.

territories.

B. Furniture

As in the case of household utensils, the production and consumption of furniture have undergone notable restrictions in recent months. Rationing of new furniture, including unfinished and machine-finished furniture, began February 1, 1943. This applies only to beds and kitchen and living-room cupboards. Other articles of furniture, such as tables, chairs, desks, metal furniture, and small pieces have not been produced for six months and are left free.[1] In addition it has been announced that young married couples can no longer receive purchasing permits. All efforts are made, however, to provide them with second-hand furniture.[2] Since the middle of 1942, only one standard type of furniture for each room has been manufactured.[3] Some quantities of furniture are being imported from the occupied East; none may be exported without authorization.

C. Lighting and Heating Equipment

The production of lamps has been severely curtailed and they are now almost unobtainable. There is a serious shortage of electric light bulbs which probably results as much from the Government's desire to reduce electricity consumption as from other considerations. The strength of bulbs produced has

1. Frankfurter Zeitung, 3 and 7 February 1943.
2. Ministry of Economic Warfare, No. 63, 22 April 1943.
3. Il Telegrafo, 7 July 1942, p. 4.

been greatly reduced for this reason. Late in 1942, distribution of stocks was to be reduced to 4 percent of normal.[1] As of February 15, however, the sale of bulbs from 10 watt-20 volt up for private household use was forbidden until 31 August 1943. Candles may still be produced although their use in public places is forbidden.

The situation is similar with regard to heating equipment. Central heating apparatus has been standardized and the number of types reduced from 3,000 to 250.[2] Very few stoves of any type are being produced. All stocks in the hands of retailers, including iron and ceramic stoves and kitchen ranges using coal, gas, electricity, or a combination of these, have been registered and restrictions have been placed on their use.

III. ESSENTIAL PERSONAL GOODS

The situation in regard to essential personal goods is serious from the standpoint of both quantity and quality. Most goods in this category are rationed; and the rations, although generally available (except in the case of some sewing equipment), are considerably smaller than pre-war consumption. The most significant factor in the essential personal goods picture is the generally inferior quality of the articles.

A. Soap and Toilet Articles

Soap production is greatly restricted in quantity and

1. Berliner Boersen Zeitung, 3 November 1942, p. 4; Relazione Interrazionadi, 4 November 1942, p. 1226.

2. Frankfurter Zeitung, 11 October 1942, p. 5; Deutsche Bergwerke- Zeitung, 23 August 1942, p. 2.

and quality. According to last reports, the annual per capita soap consumption has been reduced from an average of 7.25 kg. at the outbreak of war to 3.78 kg., of which 2.70 is in the form of powder for laundry purposes. In November 1942 the monthly quota for normal consumers was 250 g. of laundry soap and one piece of toilet soap (probably 100 g.). Infants under two years were still receiving real soap at last report. The standard cake soap, however, is of extremely poor quality and contains mostly clay and only about 15 percent fatty acids, or about one-fourth the British fat content. The standard soap powder has a 13 percent fat content.[1] There is some indication that Germany is now using synthetic fats in soap manufacture and that the product obtained may have a fat content of 78 percent.[2]

According to last reports, shaving soap is of reasonable quality, containing 80.1 percent fatty acids. Razor blades have been standardized and limited to two types since mid-1942. Production in 1942 amounted to 1.2 billion, of which one-third was exported and most of the remainder allotted to the army.[3] The allowance for individual civilians is five a month.[4] Early this year renovation of used blades was undertaken on a handicraft scale, allowing their return to their owners.[5]

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1. Ministry of Economic Warfare analysis, 14 July 1942. CID 22532C.
2. AFHQ, Weekly Summary of World Events, No. 23, 002424.
3. Bern (P) telegram No. 1583, 9 March 1943.
4. L1514, 28 October 1942.
5. Bern (P) telegram No. 1021, 13 February 1943.

Toothpaste is scarce but according to last reports was still a normal product containing glycerine and chalk flavored with peppermint.[1] Toothbrushes and combs seem to be particularly difficult to obtain; the former can be purchased only by returning an old brush for exchange.

B. Sewing Equipment

Restrictions on the production of sewing equipment are probably less severely felt than the restrictions on other essential goods, and it is likely that most consumers, except air-raid victims and newly married couples, have supplies adequate for their needs. The use of first-grade iron and steel for needles and safety pins is prohibited,[2] and needles are very difficult to obtain at the present time. On the other hand, in emergency times housewives undoubtedly find that they can make a small supply last for a considerable period. Thread, although rationed and of inferior quality, is still readily obtainable.

IV. LUXURY AND SEMI-LUXURY GOODS

The same tendency towards increasing restrictions on production and consumption is also apparent in the field of luxury and semi-luxury goods, although it is less conspicuous because curtailment of production generally took place earlier in the war than in the case of essential goods. However, these curtailments were less sharply felt during the first years of war because of the influx of luxury "invasion" goods brought about by the men of the occupying armies. This source is now

1. MID, 27407, 27 August 1942.
2. Deutsche Bergwerks-Zeitung, 24 December 1942.

exhausted. Non-essential goods have been less frequently rationed than essential goods, but for the most part they are now unobtainable, except second-hand. Some goods of this class are at present being produced in France and the Lowlands.

A. Electrical Appliances and Household Machinery

All electrical appliances have been standardized and rationed since the middle of 1942.[1] In February 1943 the production of one hundred different types of such goods was banned, including vacuum cleaners and parts (both of large and hand variety), carpet sweepers, electric razors, heating pads, permanent-wave apparatus, heat-producing apparatus for medical purposes, electric candles, bedroom fixtures, sewing machine motors for household use, and all other motors for household use.[2] Since mid-1942, sewing machines produced for household use have been of an extremely simplified type, which were sold only in exchange for an old machine or a corresponding quantity of scrap iron. At present, only two types of sewing machines may be manufactured for private use, and their distribution is restricted to bombed-out families or families with many children.

B. Cosmetics and Toilet Articles

All purchases of this type of goods must be registered. There is evidence that such cosmetics as face cream were available in the fall of 1942. However, in March 1943 the production

1. Deutsche Bergwerks-Zeitung, 21 July 1942; Frankfurter Zeitung, 22 August 1942, 20 August 1942.

2. Frankfurter Zeitung, 12 February 1943; Voelkischer Beobachter, B.A. 10 February 1943, p. 4.

of cosmetics, perfumes, bath salts, etc., was banned.

C. Miscellaneous

Watches and clocks have virtually disappeared from the shops. The manufacture of ladies's watches has been prohibited since August, 1942. All sales of watches, except for exports, are subject to authorization. However, watches are apparently being produced on a fairly extensive scale in France for German consumption.

Even such common articles as shoe laces are hard to obtain. The production of all metal jewelry is forbidden. Trunks and suitcases are sold on the basis of certificates, primarily to purchasers in bombed districts.[1] The final blow to the luxury trade was dealt with the total mobilization decree of March 15 closing all businesses with less than five employees.[2]

V. CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT FACILITIES

In general the manufacture of goods for cultural uses has been greatly curtailed or prohibited altogether. As in the case of other luxury articles, production of these goods ceased early in the war, and therefore the recent decrees restricting manufacture of consumer articles have had less effect in this field than in the field of essential goods. The German government, however, has tried to keep open places of amusement, such as movies and theaters, since entertainment plays an important part in morale.

1. Bern (P) cable No. 4270, 19 July 1943.
2. Bern (S) telegram, CID 12648, 2 May 1943.

A. Books, Newspapers, and Periodicals

Books and art objects are apparently much in demand but scarce, although production of the former is reported to have increased from 25.4 million in 1938 to 34.2 million in 1941.[1] In view of the paper shortage, however, it is unlikely that this production rate is still being maintained, and the organization of circulating libraries has been urged to offset the shortage.[2] School textbooks are very scarce and are sold only in exchange for old ones.[3] In March 1943 it was reported that 1,000 out of 2,500 existing newspapers were to be closed down or merged. The number of technical and economic publications has also been sharply reduced.[4]

B. Writing Materials

The supply of writing materials is very severely limited. Writing paper is rationed and sold only in half-size sheets. Since May 1, 1943 the production of even the standardized type of fountain pen has been prohibited. Pencils have been standardized and their production limited to 15 types, mostly unlacquered. Typewriters are unavailable to ordinary civilians, and there is some evidence of government requisitioning of privately owned typewriters.

C. Musical Instruments

Radios were rationed late in 1942 and their purchase

1. Wirtschaft und Statistik, November 1940; Das Reich, 27 September 1942.

2. Frankfurter Zeitung, 28 March 1943, p. 3.

3. Social Demokraten, 29 September 1942, p. 8; Frankfurter Zeitung, 22 August 1942, p. 2.

4. Frankfurter Zeitung, 23 March 1943, p. 2; 17 March 1942, p. 2.

permitted only in special cases.[1] Early this year second-hand radios were also rationed.[2] Parts may be purchased only on surrender of used equipment.[3] Popular radio receiving sets are still being made, but their purchase is limited to households which have lost sets in air raids.[4] Phonographs and records are not available although they are unrationed. The production of musical instruments has virtually ceased, especially since the introduction of the new civilian mobilization plan of March 15. Harmonicas and accordions may be sold only to soldiers.[5]

D. Theaters and Movies

The number of movie theaters is reported to have increased from 5,446 in 1938 to 7,043 in 1942, while the number of movie-goers has increased from 892,000 in 1941 to 1,067,000 in 1942.[6] Films are now standardized, but the quality of technicolor film in particular is reported much improved.[7] Not only the movies but the theaters, concert halls, variety shows, and night clubs of Berlin were reported previous to the recent raids as doing a rushing business with tickets booked

1. Koelnischer Zeitung, 11 November 1942; Frankfurter Zeitung, 11 November 1942.
2. Voelkischer Beobachter, B.A., 4 January 1943, p. 4.
3. Deutsche Bergwerks-Zeitung, 11 December 1942.
4. Ostseezeitung/Stettiner General Auzeiger, 18 June 1943.
5. Frankfurter Zeitung, 22 November 1942.
6. Berlin Radio, 5 July 1943, 2:00 p.m., E.W.T.
7. Frankfurter Zeitung, 11 November 1942, p. 5,

up three weeks in advance.[1] As late as July 1943, twenty-six Berlin theaters were reported to be offering nightly performances,[2] although in the face of the recent air raids and evacuation orders such entertainment undoubtedly is not being maintained at present.

VI. CONSUMER SERVICES

The lack of consumer services is fully as conspicuous as is the scarcity of goods. All services are slow and difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Deliveries in many cases are curtailed altogether, although urban railways and tramways have been used extensively for delivery purposes. Laundry services are noticeably poor and appear likely to disappear altogether in the not distant future owing to the cutting of supplies of machinery, felt canvas, and other necessary articles.[3] Virtually no hairdressers are operating. Barbers are reported to have been forbidden to shave their clients.[4]

The chief problem is that of repair facilities. Most small craftsmen previously engaged in production are now required to limit their activities solely to repair work. Nevertheless, most repair work, with the exception of shoes and clothing which are government-organized and protected, is almost impossible to secure, particularly in the case of technical repairs such as those of watches, electrical and

1. CID 21475 (S).

2. Svenska Dagbladet, 18 July 1942.

3. London (P) telegram No. 4234, 9 July 1942; Ministry of Economic Warfare, 1 September 1942.

4. L3428 (PI No. 507-105, July 1942-September 1942).

plumbing repairs, etc. Permission is also required for some repairs. In the case of alarm clocks and watches, only workers have permission to have repair work done. This, however, is no guarantee they will succeed in finding someone to do it.[1]

1. Il Telegrafo, 20 June 1942, p.4.